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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/917,912	07/31/2001	Masayuki Kojima	503.28546CV9	1412

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EXAMINER

ANGEBRANNDT, MARTIN J

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1756

DATE MAILED: 10/07/2002

6

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/917,912

Examiner

Martin J Angebrannt

Applicant(s)

KOJIMA ET AL.

Art Unit

1756

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 July 2002.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**.
- 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 8-17,27 and 66 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 8-17,27 and 66 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application)
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____

- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other:

Office Action Summary

1 The response provided by the applicant has been read and given careful consideration. Responses to the arguments offered by the applicant are presented after the first rejection to which they are directed. The declaration requirement is withdrawn.

2 The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. § 103 which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Subject matter developed by another person, which qualifies as prior art only under subsection (f) or (g) of section 102 of this title, shall not preclude Patentability under this section where the subject matter and the claimed invention were, at the time the invention was made, owned by the same person or subject to an obligation of assignment to the same person.

3 Claims 8-17,27 and 66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 as applied to claims cited above, and further in view of Nakamura et al. EP 0247603, Moe et al. '355 and Peterman et al. '252.

Elliot specifically teaches on page 273, the etching of an imaged resist using a carbon tetrachloride plasma to etch Al-Si, followed by a hydrogen plasma cleaning, a carbon tetrafluoride:Oxygen plasma. After this etching cycle the subsequent treatment with a wet etchant for aluminum is taught. The etching of an aluminum substrate using a carbon tetrachloride plasma:hydrogen etch, followed by a 60 second oxygen plasma passivation is

taught on page 272. The use of strippers to remove the resist after etching using solvents is disclosed on page 273 and 274. Page 57 teaches that after wet etching, rinsing and drying is conventional for aluminum layers. The use of nitric, phosphoric and acetic acid to perform the wet etch of aluminum is taught on pages 57, 256 and 257. The use of rinsing and drying steps after resist removal using solvents is taught on page 58. Also conventional rinsing and drying after either wet or dry etching is taught on page 267. The minimization of exposure to the atmosphere which allows formation of HCl which subsequently etches the aluminum.

Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 teaches the use of an etchant gas for patterning the aluminum alloy layer masked by the resist, followed by downstream etching/stripping of the resist pattern in an oxygen containing atmosphere, where the substrate is transferred under an inert gas atmosphere or vacuum from the first etch apparatus to the second. (page 3/lines 27-53, hereinafter 3/27-53) The use of this process with other alloys is disclosed. (4/57-58) The avoidance of exposure to the atmosphere is specifically taught (3/44-46).

Moe et al. '355 teaches the use of either heated air or nitrogen to dry the wafers after stripping and rinsing. (1/32-36 and 49-56) Please note that the chamber in which the drying takes place is the same as the rinsing chamber. (see terminology rinse-dryer housing at 4/3).

Peterman et al. '252 teaches the dry etching using chlorine gas of various metallic contacts/interconnections. These include Al, Cu, Si, Ti, W, Ag, Au or alloys or **composites** of the preceding metals. (see claim 4 and 3/48-52).

It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to add transferal of the substrate being process between different apparatus under vacuum as taught by Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 and/or substitute the etching conditions disclosed for the metal films for those disclosed by Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 with a reasonable expectation of success based upon their application in the same field and the direction within each of the references to minimize the exposure of the substrate to the atmosphere before the residual

Art Unit: 1756

chlorine has been completely removed and that it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to perform the rinsing and drying steps under a nitrogen atmosphere rather than in air in the processes of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 as modified by Nakamura et al. EP 0247603, based upon the teachings of Moe et al. '355 that this is known in the art and the teachings of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 to avoid exposure to air and further adds that it would have been obvious to use the process disclosed by the combination of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982, Moe et al. '355 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 with laminates which are composed of plural films of different metals forming a composite metallic film in place of the alloys of different metals disclosed by Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 with a reasonable expectation of success based upon their similar reactivity to the etch in either form and the teaching of their equivalent function in the semiconductor art.

Clearly the teaching of Peterman et al. '252 teaches that alloys or composites of Al, Cu, Si, Ti, W, Ag, Au as well as the films of the elements themselves are able to be etched by chlorinated plasmas, similar to those disclosed by Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603. This teaching is relied upon by the examiner to extend the teachings of these references from single layer films. The rejection is maintained and applied to new claims. Note the concern with the formation of corrosive residues within Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603, which is the goal of the instant claims. The applicant also fails to appreciate that etching processes are etching processes and the rates are determined by the materials etched the mere addition of a resist mask can only have the obvious result of preventing etching of the

Art Unit: 1756

covered areas. Additionally, there is no language in the instant claims concerning how the layers were formed on the substrate and therefore this is not a relevant issue to the instant claims.

The current claim language recites "... said first and second locations being capable of communication with each other through and atmosphere having a pressure reduced from atmospheric pressure ..." The full breadth of this appears to embrace both etch chambers being connected to etch other directly or via an intermediate chamber and both etch chambers being able to connect to the same transport chamber, but not mechanically linked together. This is also congruent with the language of dependent claims such as 45 which indicates that the etch chambers are closed off from the transport between them during etching and open to them otherwise.

The applicant argues that another examiner issued broader claims in US patent 5,868,854. **The examiner of the instant application points instead to the affirmance by the Board of Appeals in the parent application 08/470443 on 05/31/2001 applying the same or a similar rejection to that in the instant application. The examiner notes that generally, the opinion of the Board of Appeals carries more weight.** The applicant argues that transfer process between the two etching processes under vacuum is not taught in the prior art of record. **The examiner points to Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 which states "Next, the substrate 1 is transferred to a dry processing apparatus for stripping the patterned photo resist 3, passing through a vacuum system or an inert gas purged system, in order to avoid being exposed to the atmosphere. If the substrate is exposed to the atmosphere, the residual chlorine on the substrate reacts with water contained in the air and corrodes the alloy, as explained in the prior art." (3/42-46).** Not only does the prior art teach the invention as

Art Unit: 1756

claimed, including the transfer between etch chambers under vacuum, but specifically teaches the same benefits as ascribed to it by the applicant. The whole idea of ashing the resist is to remove it, therefore the arguments that the prior art does not teach the removal of the resist by the ashing process is entirely without merit. **What does the applicant construe "The patterned photo resist 3 on the patterned alloy layer 2' is then stripped by a known downstream etching methods. A stripping apparatus using microwave power, which is preferably employed in this stripping step, and is also called downstream etching or after glow ashing" to mean if not complete removal of the resist. (Nakamura et al. EP 0247603 at (3/42-46)).** The use of inert gas (nitrogen) during drying is taught by Moe et al. '355 in the cited portions. The applicant's representative misses the mark in describing the source of the corrosive materials on page 8 of the response. They are not produced during the resist formation, but impregnated into the resist during its use as a protective film, during the first etch process, which uses chlorides and/or fluorides. This is fully appreciated in the prior art of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603. The conventional rinsing and drying after either wet or dry etching is taught on page 267 of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and as is the use of drying. The applicant has not shown that the processes that they use differ from the conventional rinsing and drying steps of the prior art in time or effect. **The use of the laminates might render this more critical, but no claim limitations distinguishing the claimed invention from the conventional processes, which would be prudent in any case based upon the teachings of the prior art concerning corrosive residues, along with a declaration evidencing the difference has been presented by the applicant.** The applicant apparently has forgotten that Al and Al alloys are

Art Unit: 1756

embraced by the claims, please see claim 66 and clearly undergo corrosion as evidenced by the prior art. The oxygen plasma and dry resist stripping are taught by of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 contrary to the applicant assertions. . The conventional rinsing and drying after either wet or dry etching is taught on page 267 of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and as is the use of drying which lends itself to combination with the teachings of Moe et al. '355. The examiner notes that composites are taught in Peterman et al. '252 and that the Board of Appeals has seen this reference. The examiner notes that corrosion appears to be a prevalent problem and that the combination of the after treatments of the claims rendered obvious by the prior art all appear to be appreciated as reducing corrosion in the prior art. The rejection stands.

5 Claims 8-17,27 and 66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as obvious over Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 as applied to claims cited above, and further in view of Nakamura et al. EP 0247603, Moe et al. '355, Peterman et al. '252 and Noguchi et al. '678

Noguchi et al. '678 teaches the use of two etch chambers connected to each other via a vacuum antechamber (50). The first etch chamber is use to dry etch aluminum or the like using halide gasses (RIE etching) and the second is used to oxygen plasma ash/etch the resist, thereby removing it and halide contaminants. The care taken to prevent contact of the etched substrates with water or air during the transfer to the post treatment chamber is disclosed (1/30-67 and 2/28-43). This is illustrated in figure 2.

In addition to the basis provided above, it would have been obvious to use two etch chamber mechanically linked to etch other as taught by Noguchi et al. '678 in the process of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 as modified by Nakamura et al. EP 0247603, Moe et al. '355 and Peterman et al. '252 with a reasonable expectation of achieving the

desired transfer between the etch chambers without air/atmospheric contact based upon the teachings of Noguchi et al. '678 to that effect.

In addition to the basis provided above, the examiner points to Noguchi et al. '678, who teaches that care is taken taken to prevent contact of the etched substrates with water or air during the transfer between chambers (1/30-67 and 2/28-43).

6 Claims 8-17,27 and 66 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-14 of U.S. Patent No. 5,007,981. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because a similar and overlapping scope of coverage is claimed and the use of a mask during the etch process is claimed in the patent. Please note that one of ordinary skill in the art would read this to include resist masks which have been used in photolithographic processing since 1852, which dichromated gelatin was used as a mask during the etching of copper. Truly the use of photoresists as masks in etching is old and well known.

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(b) would overcome an actual or provisional rejection on a non-statutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.78(d).

The applicant's representative misses the mark in describing the source of the corrosive materials on page 8 of the response. They are note produced during the resist formation, but impregnated into the resist during its use as a protective film, during the first etch process, which uses chlorides and/or fluorides. This is fully appreciated in the prior art of Elliot "Integrated Circuit Fabrication Technology" ©1982 and Nakamura et al. EP 0247603. Note that claim 5 describes the different etch clammers.

7 Claims 8-17,27 and 66 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-6 of U.S. Patent No. 6,077,788.

Art Unit: 1756

Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because a similar and overlapping scope of coverage is claimed .

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(b) would overcome an actual or provisional rejection on a non-statutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.78(d).

This reference was applied and the previous citation was in error, which as the requirement of obviousness double patenting is common ownership was appreciated by the applicant. The buffer chamber limitation meets the reduced pressure transfer limitation. The rejection stands.

8 THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL. Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

9 Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Martin Angebrannt whose telephone number is (703) 308-4397.

I am normally available between 7:30 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Thursday and 7:30 AM and 4:00 PM on alternate Fridays.

Art Unit: 1756

If repeated attempts to reach me are unsuccessful, my supervisor may be reached at (703) 308-2464.

Facsimile correspondence should be directed to (703) 872-9311.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the Group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.



Martin J. Angebranndt
Primary Examiner, Group 1750
October 3, 2002